

## Preventing Info Overload for 'Future' Soldiers

By Nathan Hodge  January 23, 2009 | 1:10:52 PM Categories: [FCS Watch](#), [Net-Centric](#)



<http://blog.wired.com/defense/2009/01/preventing-info.html#more>

ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, Maryland -- If all goes to plan -- [and that's a big if](#) -- the Army's future armored brigades will be a fully wired force, complete with drones, robots and sensors and connected through a next-gen wireless network. Each armored vehicle is supposed to serve as a "node" on the network, meaning that a vehicle commander on the ground will be able to see the same digital picture of the battlefield that can only be seen today in a top-echelon command post.

That means a firehose of data -- imagery, video feeds and other information -- will be streaming in from sensors, along with voice, instant messages and other communication. Managing that flow of information will pose a major challenge, and the service is conducting early network tests to see if the system can work.

As part of a [publicity push](#), the Army invited reporters to this sprawling test range in northeastern Maryland to watch a live video feed from White Sands Missile Range, N.M., where the service is conducting [Future Combat Systems](#) "Integrated Mission Test 1." At White Sands, soldiers sat in "wire frames" (essentially cubicles configured as the control station of a future armored reconnaissance vehicle) to test how they will interact within the network.

Some of the soldiers were hooked up to equipment -- like the [EEG](#) skullcaps pictured here -- to measure operator fatigue. Susan Grill, associate director of testing and evaluation, said the test of this "Warfighter Machine Interface" was supposed to see if soldiers could accomplish their tasks without cognitive overload.

Yesterday's test was a demonstration of the application layer of the FCS network -- think of it as the Microsoft Office bundled software package for the future command post. But the whole FCS network is still far from complete, and the first network-equipped armored vehicle is not being delivered until later this spring.

Steve Kreider, the executive director for the test, said these kinds of simulations are meant to replicate future ops without having the full complement of equipment. "We're delivering a full brigade," he said. "We can't afford to produce all of that hardware, go and take that to the field, and that's the first time we test it."